

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6947

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 3449

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, EG, IS

SUBJ: KNESSET DISCUSSES REDUCTION OF ISRAELI
FORCES NEAR SUEZ CANAL

1. SUMMARY: IN KNESSET DISCUSSION JUNE 4 ON GOVERN-
MENT'S DECISION TO REDUCE FORCES NEAR SUEZ CANAL,
FM ALLON DESCRIBED IT AS DEMONSTRATION OF ISRAELI
SINCERITY TO MOVE TOWARD PEACE AND WELCOMED
EGYPTIAN DECISION TO OPEN CANAL. ALLON AND OPPOSITION
SPEAKER WARNED HOWEVER THAT ISRAELI CARGO
MUST BE PERMITTED PASSAGE THROUGH THE CANAL. END
SUMMARY.

2. IN BRIEF 40 MINUTE DEBATE, KNESSET JUNE 4
DISCUSSED GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO REDUCE MILITARY
FORCES NEAR SUEZ CANAL AND REFERRED OPPOSITION
MOTION TO KNESSET DEFENSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE.

3. FM ALLON DESCRIBED DECISION AS UNILATERAL ACT
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OF GOODWILL BASED ON ISRAELI CONSIDERATION TO

DEMONSTRATE TO EGYPT AND WORLD THE SINCERITY OF ITS INTENTIONS TO REDUCE TENSIONS AND MAKE PROGRESS TOWARDS PEACE. THERE IS RISK IN THE GESTURE BUT IT IS WORTH TAKING, AND SHOULD PROVE OF CONSIDERABLE VALUE IN IMPROVING ATMOSPHERE ON EVE OF PM'S TALK WITH US PRESIDENT. ALLON SAID THAT INITIAL WORLD REACTONS HAVE FULFILLED GOI EXPECTATION. HE HOPED THAT EGYPT WOULD UNDERSTAND GESTURE CORRECTLY AND NOT BE TEMPTED TO MISINTERPRET IT AS OPENING FOR MILITARY MOVE.

4. DESCRIBING REOPENING OF SUEZ CANAL AND RECONSTRUCTION OF CITIES ALONG CANAL AS "IMPORTANT AND CONSTRUCTIVE ACTS", ALLON WARMLY WELCOMED THEM AND HOPED THEY WOULD ADVANCE EGYPT'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. HE WARNED, HOWEVER, THAT FREEDOM OF SHIPPING MUST APPLY TO ISRAELI CARGOES, AS PROVIDED FOR IN DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT.

5. ELIEZER SHOSTAK (LIKUD-INDEPENDENT CENTER) ACCUSED EGYPT OF BEING IN VIOLATION OF INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT CONCERNING FREEDOM OF SHIPPING IN SUEZ CANAL. HE URGED ISRAEL INSIST ON FREE PASSAGE OF ITS SHIPS AND CARGOES RATHER THAN MAKE GESTURE OF REDUCTION OF FORCES. HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY ISRAEL WAS PRAISING EGYPT FOR OPENING CANAL.

6. BENJAMIN HALEVI (FORMER LIKUD DOVE, NOW INDEPENDENT) NOTED THAT ANY GROUP WHICH WANTS TO SEE PROGRESS TOWARDS PEACE AND REDUCTION OF TENSIONS IN AREA SHOULD BE PLEASED WITH RECENT DEVELOPMENTS. ONLY HERUT PARTY OF LIKUD, WHICH OBJECTS TO ANY UNILATERAL ISRAELI GESTURE, OPPOSES THIS ACT, HE CHARGED.

7. COMMENT: WITH LARGE KNESSET MAJORITY AND PUBLIC OPINION IN FAVOR OF GOVERNMENT ACTIONS, AND TWO LIKUD PARTNERS, FREE CENTER AND LIBERALS, THREATENING RESPECTIVELY TO ABSTAIN AND BE ABSENT, UNCLASSIFIED

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LIKUD OPPOSITION DID NOT PRESS THEIR ATTACK IN KNESSET IN MANNER WHICH WOULD HAVE FORCED VOTE ON SUBSTANCE. STATEMENTS BY PM AS WELL AS ALLON'S WARNING IN KNESSET JOINED BY OPPOSITION, THAT ISRAELI CARGOES MUST BE PERMITTED PASSAGE THROUGH CANAL, WILL FOCUS PUBLIC ATTENTION ON THIS ISSUE.
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